

An Herb Spiral

Plants know what they want - your job is to pay attention. With an herb spiral you can grow lots of herbs with very different needs in a small space.

What you need:

- Enough dirt to make a pile about 2' high and 3-4' wide.

- Fist-sized rocks

- Herbs

How to build it:

Use the best dirt you can find and enrich with compost if you've got it. Mound up the dirt in a spot where it will get at least six hours of sun a day. You can build the spiral on a

patch of grass, just pat down a layer of cardboard or newspaper to prevent weeds. Set the stones in a clockwise

spiral going up the mound; the stones will help to direct the flow of water and will also heat up in the sun and keep the herbs warm.

The top of the spiral will be warmest and driest, best for Mediterranean herbs.

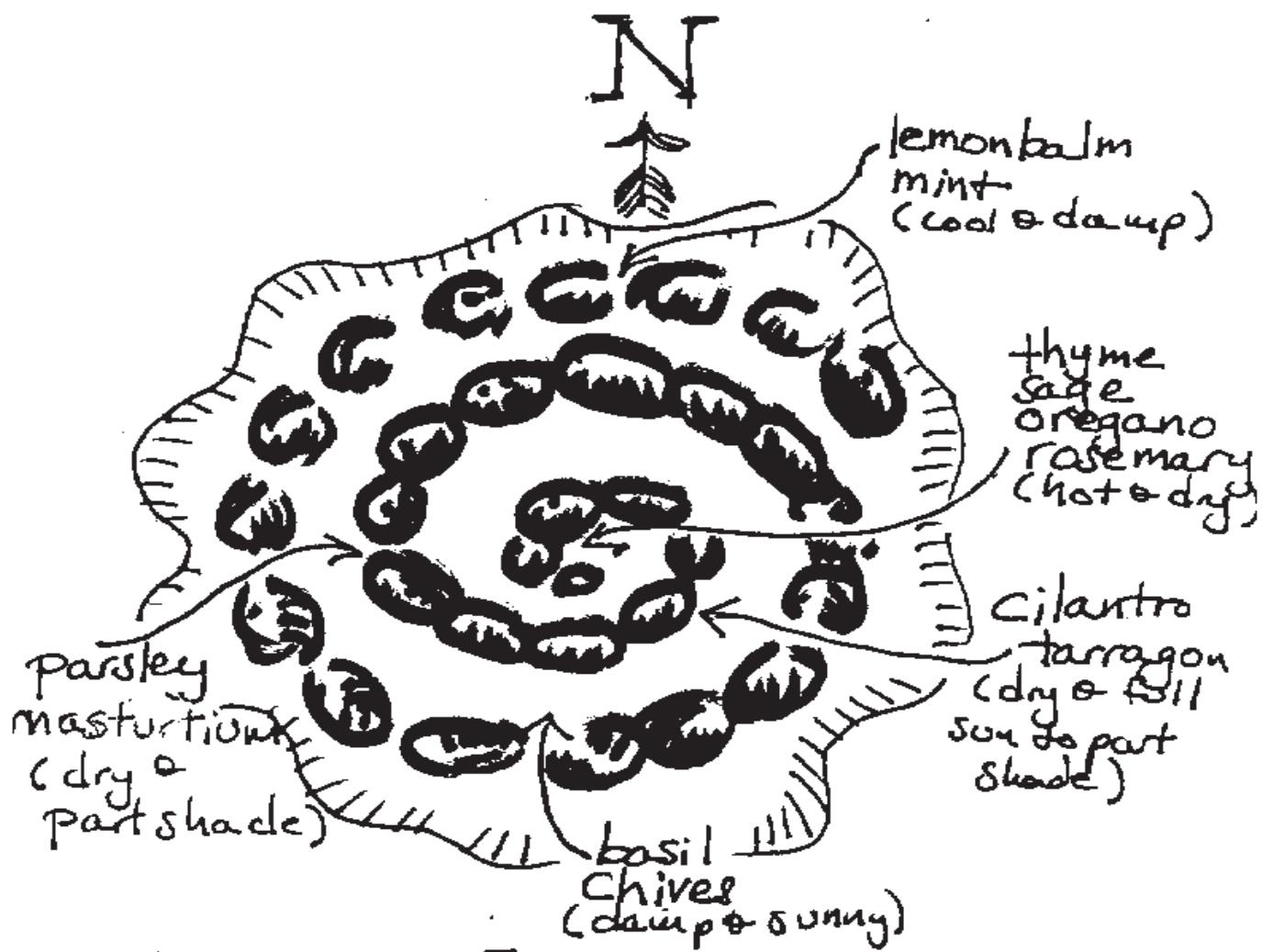
The lower part will be damper, better for cool climate herbs. The south side of the spiral will get

more sun than the north side - Voila! microclimates

COMPOST IS EASY!

A compost pile can be just a big heap of yard waste and kitchen scraps, although if the composting will happen faster if you use some kind of enclosure (wire fencing, palisade) that has open sides to air.

Surprising things you can compost: coffee grounds (especially wood ash); fine cork; cotton balls; chewing gum; burnt matches.



Some Herbs to Try:

BASIL: Good in soup, stew, bread—anything.

Basil leaves can be layered in a jar of olive oil and kept in the refrigerator.

CHIVES: Onion-flavored leaves, good for salads, bread, soup or just sprinkled over everything.

CILANTRO: Used a lot in Mexican and Asian cooking. The leaves are cilantro and the seeds are coriander.

LEMON BALK: Lemony leaves good in salads and tea.

MINT: Many varieties of mint, each with a slightly different taste. Good in salads and tea. Mint spreads like crazy, to limit spreading plant in a buried flowerpot or coffee can with its bottom removed.

NASTURTIUM: Peppery flowers are good in salads; repels insects in the garden.

OREGANO: Good on pizzas, soups, vegetables, dried well.

PARSLEY: Good on all kinds of things and very high in vitamins; also a natural breath freshener. Don't plant near mint - they don't grow well together.

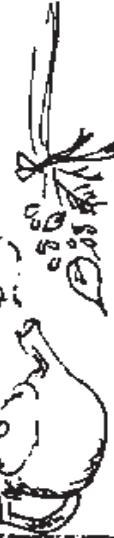
SAGE: Good in soups, roast potatoes, on pizza - strongly flavored so you only need a little. Sage tea is a mouth warmer and good for the digestion; an old saying is "you will never be ill so long as sage grows in your garden."

TARRAGON: French tarragon has more flavor than Russian tarragon - good in soups, sauces and vinegars. Trim back occasionally to keep the plant full and bushy.

THYME: There are many varieties of thyme, each with its own aroma and flavor - plant several. Use sprigs in soups, stews, sauces, pizza. Thyme flowers attract bees, which is good for pollinating the garden.

Herbal Tea

Almost any kind of herb can be used for tea. Use 1/2 cup of leaves (not metal) and put in two tablespoons of chopped fresh herb. Pour in two cups boiling water and let stand for 6 or 7 minutes - no more than 10 minutes or the tea will be bitter. Strain into a cup and sweeten with honey.



ROSEMARY: Aromatic needles great for flavoring soups, mashed potatoes, vinegar. Dries easily.